k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

CHAPTER VII

Arab Honour

GUESTS AND THE LAWS OF HOSPITALITY

574 Among Arabs generally, and more especially among the Badawin of the desert, a guest (*thaif*) is a very sacred person indeed, and the unwritten laws of hospitality lay down that such a person, even though he be a perfect stranger, and of a strange tribe, be entertained, fed and looked after in fitting manner, and to the best of the host's power.

There is a beautiful Arab couplet, which takes the form of a host's welcome to his guest, and illustrates better than any words of mine, the tent-dweller's duty towards his guest. It runs as follows, and has been addressed to me in my capacity as guest on several occasions, notably by H.M. King 'Abdul 'Aziz al Sa'ud when I visited him in 1920:

[539] "O Guest of ours, though you have come, though you have visited us, and
though you have honoured our dwellings:
We verily are the real guests, and you are the Lord of this house."

A guest is, of course, expected not to impose on his host nor take advantage of the laws of hospitality, unless he genuinely requires food and rest. A traveller, for instance, at the end of a long day's journey, will look round for a tent where he can spend the night, and finding one in the distance can legitimately go to it and get a night's food and lodging. Should he, however, be within a mile or two of his own destination, he must make an effort and complete the distance rather than sponge on perhaps poor strangers.

In the desert a man (or party) does not brazenly go up to a tent, and demand hospitality. That is never done. Gentlemanly instincts are highly developed in the Badawin. A man approaches the tents of his prospective host modestly and with becoming diffidence. He must

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

when in camp. I have found them very difficult to translate, for there is a great deal of local patois in the text. 527 533

I

SONG OF MUTAIRI WOMEN 533 539

(After the surrender by the English of Faisal al Duwish to Bin Sa'ud)

(Each verse is sung four times by the chorus)

Ya galbi illi ghada kharísh
Haddar as sama, hass taiyara.

Taiyáratain shálat Al Duwish
Ma'ad Yirja illa Diyára.

Wa haraima fi atraf al 'Ashish
Wa ukhta a lal hathm Sabára.

Translation.

Oh my heart (expressing fear) you are become mad, for
Under the sky is heard the sound of the aeroplane.

Two aeroplanes have carried off the Duwish,
Never again will he return to his homeland.

His women now sit disconsolate among the huts made of reeds,
While his sister has been driven to break her heart.

II

SONG OF 'AWAZIM WOMEN

(Each verse repeated four times)

Abbé tamanna lét man yirkab al Tiyar
Al mautar al Saiyid la sahburiyah.

Abbé anhab aleh illi nahuda, ma'ai bu Kubár
Wa abbe nahash bihs, yam al diyar al Shamaliyah.

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

533
539

Songs of 'Awazim Women

Mesir ash shahar yetwi fi tarfit nahár
La-i-gíd alay al taim, wa al khad bariyah.

Natahitni wa lagahni alay-ha ashgar al Nathár
Ghad al gulb hamaitha, a la ra'ad aishfiyah.

An in malaktaher, eirt min hazbat al Tijar
Bassat wa sigat, wa sár lutf al hashiliyah.

Translation.

I hope and long to ride her in a car
In the car of the Saiyid which hoots its horn.

I wish to steal her away, whose breasts are not too large,
And I wish to flee with her to the countries of the North.

What indeed would take a camel a month, can be done in one short day,
I'll make him haste his way, along the desert track.

She stopped me and met me, with her golden hair all loose,
My heart was afire for her, for the tattoo marks on her face.

And were I to possess her now, I'd become one of the merchant class,
Though she beat me and lamed me, happiness would be mine for ever.

III

SONG OF 'AWAZIM WOMEN

(Each verse repeated four times)

A ruz al Assa, wa al bisht, wa aumi rai al rail
Ta'ad al Zaragi, wa zah tadui ma'a hila.

Assa ha taghulla, ma waguf yum a suwat hail,
Hanna waghifiir fil turab, wa asiyah wa mila.

Ana abbé y wasalni illa-l-bait gabal al lail
Abbé ashuf ha min aimmi, wa galbi y raila.

k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ

Song of the Black Camels

533
539

Mita yinzelun al 'Ad ya hayiri al tawil
Sabart ya sabra al Khata, thaat al hila.

Ashiri la tub albini mithi al Nejma al Suhail
Thalatha wa Khamis wa sit saffat mujadilah.

Translation.

I raised my stick and waved my coat to the owner of the car,
He went over the rise a bag full of deceit.

May he be brought to confusion, who did not stop when I hailed him
For I stood in the road, and called and waved my cloak.

I desired him to get me to my house ere night overtook me,
I wished to see with my eyes her whom my heart desired to behold.

When will he return, that tall traveller, for
I have waited a dreadful wait, till I have lost all hope.

My dear one, you are like the star Canopus,
And I will yet unplait three, five, six of your lovely braids.

IV

QASIDAT AL SHURUF*

Al Shuruf wail ich
a la ma fad
Wail ich a la daur ich
al 'ammah

Ya tawal ma Faisal
yem Ra'iyich
Al yum Ra'iyich
ghailama

Hatti Jinnaiya†
a la yemnach
Ta-hahari add
Ibn Lami.

* The famous black camel herd of the Mutair. † A hill in the Summan (Najd).

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

533
539

Translation.

Oh ye Shuruf, woe unto you
for ye failed;
Woe to you, for ye failed
when needed,
For the long-lifed Faisal
was your herdsman;
To-day your herdsman he is
no longer.
Put the hill of Jinnaiya
on your right
And depart ye to
Ibn Lami.

V

'Ajman song celebrating Rakan al Hithlain's return from captivity in Istambul.

(*Shaikh Salim al Hamud*, 10.8.40.)

Ya fátri dhibbi tawárif tamíya
Ilya zimatlich mithl khashm hassáni
Khubbi khabib al Dhíb majar haddíya
Tanáhari bizzan zain al Mibámi
Mohámmadan lazmán aláina mijíah
Gabal al sadich wa gabal haiyán wadáni.
Illa guthait al lázam illi alaiya
Al lázim illi ma gatha hidáni.
Agub tánáhar dírat al azujíyah
Illa aman al ras bi zafaráni.
Lait al sabar amen walla dhahiyeh
Walla tawakkad sáhibi wa shiráli.
Umma ghadda Rakan Dhib al sarriya
Willa liffa yishál sáhil hassáni.

NOTE.—The above song was composed to celebrate the return of Rakan al Hithlain, Shaikh of the 'Ajman, from prison in Istambul. He had been there eight years, and the report being current that he had died in captivity, his wife Shagha was taken in marriage by Sultan al Duwish (father of Faisal) head of all the Mutair tribe. The returned exile upbraided Shagha for only waiting seven years and asked why she could not have waited for

I: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Shagha, Mother of Faisal

him. The distressed Sultan offered to divorce Shagha, but Rakan would not agree to this and himself insisted on putting Shagha away. Shagha had borne Sultan a son, who afterwards became the great Faisal. 533 539

It was before the birth of Faisal that Shagha had her famous dream (recounted elsewhere) that she had given birth to a fiery *mish'ab* or camel-stick.

Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

mena were common to the Al Rimal or Al Ramla (Rub'al Khâli) and were always the work of Jinns (spirits). 823

(*d*) Individual Murra, he said, themselves often came out of the great desert "mad", which made them sing and laugh in strange manner. This was undoubtedly due to Jinn influence. 828

(*e*) The word Rub' al Kháli, he said, was a *hadhar* or townsman's expression, and Badawin did not know the name, and he himself had only once or twice heard it. 369 103

(*f*) Ráshid knew seven of Philby's guides personally when he made his great trans-desert journey; one of them, Falah abu Ja'sha, was his cousin. (See page 10 of Philby's book; also first part of this chapter.)

THE DEAD WOMAN WHO NURSED HER CHILD

(Recounted by Dhuwaihi bin Kharmit of the 'Awazim on 21st April, 1935, in camp at Malah, Kuwait.) 539

A man of the 'Awazim was once travelling near Hail with his young wife. The latter was with child, and in a gorge between some high rocky hills she suddenly gave birth to a baby boy, but in the process died. Her husband did all he could for her, but as he was alone, he could not save her. He buried her by putting her body in a small cave nearby, and filled up the entrance with stones. Loth to remove the child, and knowing it would shortly die for lack of milk, he laid it on its mother's breast with her left arm round it, and put the mother's left breast to the baby's mouth. He then rode away.

Nine months later a party of Badawin of the same tribe happened to wander by and camp close to the spot where the woman and child had been buried. Knowing the story they went to the cave's mouth to see if the wall was intact. To their surprise they found a few stones removed and a hole in the wall; outside on the sand they found the tracks of a child's feet running all over the ground. In great fear and filled with superstition they quickly rode away from the haunted place. In course of time the Badawin told the father, who hastened to the spot, and found the hole in the wall and the small footmarks. Looking inside the cave, he found a live boy-child sitting and prattling beside the mummified form of his dead wife. The mother's body was all dried up, except her left eye and the left side of her face, her left

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait MI
Bedouins MJ4

B 539 breast (which was full of milk) and left arm. These were alive, and similar to those of a living woman. The man, greatly fearing and praising God, took away the infant boy, placed him on his camel and rode away.

Before departing he carefully buried the remains of his dead wife, this time in a sand tomb.

According to the storyteller, this happened in his father's time, and he had it from his father that the child grew up favoured by God and man, and became a renowned fighting warrior of the tribe. He was named Khalawi and is alive to-day though very old. The name Khalawi means "born of the desert".

THE 'AWAZIM FISHERFOLK AND THE BLIND STRANGER

K 619 735 Fahad al Muhait was an old 'Azmi and lived with his two wives, his son, daughter-in-law, daughter and several children in two tents on the seashore on the southern side of the spit of land known as Ras al Ardh, some 14 miles from Kuwait. He was proud of his tribe —the great and wealthy 'Awazim—and though he was poor, they never forgot him or lost touch with him. Each spring there came to him four or five ewes to keep him supplied with milk until the summer came round again, when he would return them to their owners with many thanks. This custom is called *manihah*.

K 226 Friend Fahad was a fisherman. In spring and summer he eked out an existence by setting a reed fish-trap or *hadhara* in the sea opposite the few *sidr* trees which we used to call "Jerboa Spinney", for it was a nice place in which to free our pets when summer came and we had to go to England.

In winter he and his son fished from the shore with circular nets. Their one donkey took the catch into the bazaar where it was sold for a few annas.

On the first and fifteenth of each Arab month, and for a period of four days, the people of the coast are able to collect a certain shellfish called locally *ṣababit* when the ebb-tide recedes extra far and uncovers the shells. All the 'Awazim are fond of these. I tried th[em] once, but they were so full of sand that I did not enjoy them; perha[ps] the local people have a knack of cleaning them better than we did.

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4
Saudi Arabia MJ1

A Hunting Story

Such are the methods of the Great Bin Sa'ud, and it is by such deeds that he has won and continues to win the loyalty and love of his people.

SA 643

Al Daghamma is still alive in the 'Awazim country to-day (the 25th February, 1939).

TALE OF AN ARAB HUNTER

A true story, well known in Najd

B 537

There was once a man of the Shammar tribe of Arabia who was a very keen sportsman, and whose favourite pastime was hunting the wild oryx. One day he set off on his *dhahlúl* towards the hills of Jabal Shammar, intending to be away a few days hunting. As was his custom, he told his wife that he would be back four days hence, before noon, and that if he was not, she would know that he was either sick or something untoward had happened to him.

On the morning of the fourth day, his brother, who had been away on a long journey to Hasa returned, and at once asked where his brother was. He was told that he had gone hunting but was due back that very day before noon. Noon came, and there was no sign of him; then sunset came and still no sign. His brother then sent for his *dhahlúl*, and taking some food set out to seek his brother.

He knew the place where there were oryx in great numbers, in a part of the country where there was especially good grazing, and made sure his brother would have gone that way.

He travelled all through the night and next morning came across a "hide" which had been carefully made in the ground and surrounded by brushwood. He was very surprised to see lying in it a gun and a powder-horn, also a dagger which he recognised as belonging to his brother, and leading away from the hide a thin trail of blood. There were footmarks of oryx in great numbers round about, also footmarks along the line of blood. His only course now was to follow the line of blood. This he did, and in a depression some little way off he found his brother's *dhahlúl* grazing peacefully. At last, after going some miles, he saw in the distance a herd of oryx grazing. He approached them slowly and carefully, still following the blood

k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

539 tracks on the ground, when to his amazement he saw that one of them had something on its back. On getting closer he recognised his brother on the back of the oryx: his thighs were impaled on the long bayonet-like horns, his head was hanging down over its tail, and his arms clasped the animal's belly.

What could he do now? If he were to shoot the oryx he would most certainly kill his brother, and how could he get close enough to kill the beast with his dagger! The hunter was still alive and conscious even after the loss of much blood.

The brother thought out a plan. Making a large detour he came into a depression where he was hidden from view, and here he picked out a spot which had the very best of grazing, and to which the oryx were very likely to come. In among the grass and flowers he stuck in the ground his two daggers some way apart, and prayed that chance might bring the animals to that very spot and enable his brother to reach a dagger. He now went some distance away behind a rock and waited. Sure enough the oryx came along and grazed in the very spot where he had planted his daggers. He was able to signal to his brother to look for the daggers without frightening the oryx as the latter was facing away from him. The man on the back of the oryx looked very carefully and sure enough spotted his own dagger "growing" in the grass and was just able to reach it with his one hand. He still had the strength to plunge it into the animal's heart. The oryx rolled over on the ground, and the rescuer rushed up and gave the beast a final bullet.

He now had to pull his brother off the animal's horns which had pierced right through his thighs. This done, he bandaged him up as best he could and put him on his *dhahlúl* together with the dead oryx.

For many months the brother lay very sick, but slowly recovered. As he got better he told his family all that had happened. How he came upon this large herd of oryx and made his "hide" very carefully and then waited many long hours for them to come near enough to shoot. When he thought the right moment had arrived, he fired his old muzzle-loader at the biggest of the herd. So sure was he that he had killed it that he jumped up preparing to go out and get it. At that same instant the wounded animal was actually making a headlong

: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

charge at the hide, unable to see whence the shot had come but sensing the direction. As the hunter stood up, the oryx with his head down impaled him on his long horns and carried him away. Although nearly fainting with agony he had the presence of mind to hold on very tight with both hands round the belly of the animal, for he knew that if he once fell over on one side or the other his head would be dashed against the ground as the beast galloped off. He was powerless to kill the oryx as both his dagger and gun had dropped from him when the animal rushed him, and he had no other weapon.

The story is an old one and believed to be true. It is known to all Shammar tribesmen and is said to have taken place near Hail about one hundred years ago.

Told by 'Abdulla al Othman al Rashid of Buraida

ABRAHAM AND ISHMAEL

Coming home one day from a hawking expedition in the autumn of 1937 with Mirshid ibn Twala of the Shammar tribe, I was discussing the Palestine troubles with him, and asked why it was that the Arabs hated the Jews.

"O Abu Sa'ud," said he, "God has told us that the Jews are an accursed people whose witness is not acceptable. They were always against every Prophet sent them, notably Moses and Jesus, and when finally Muhammad the last of the Prophets was sent them by God, did they not try and murder him also on three occasions?

"Yes, Abu Sa'ud, they are a cruel and stiff-necked people and always were so, but we Badawin hate them particularly for the way Abraham's wife intrigued against Hagar the mother of Ishmael, and cruelly expelled her into the waterless desert. She intended that Hagar should die there of thirst, but God saved her and her son, our ancestor.

"Abraham was later filled with remorse and spent the latter years of his life trying to find his son Ishmael, having been told by God that he was still alive and would receive great blessing. Your Book and the Jewish Taurat says nothing about this nor how Abraham found him and then was ordered by God to take him up into the high mount of 'Arafat and there sacrifice him. No, the accursed Bani Israel (Jews) were not going to have it that way, they were going to

L Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

173 have it that Isaac was the one preferred of God, and they cooked the
186 Scriptures, so that their descendants and you Christians to this day believe that Isaac was the son whom Abraham was bidden to sacrifice."

173 "Tell me the story, O Mirshid," I said, "for I have not heard it."
539 "It happened in this wise, and I will make it short, for the whole tale is very long. It will show you, however, that Abraham in the end made up for the wrong he did to Hagar the mother of Ishmael, and proved that Ishmael was in truth the dearer of his two sons, and was the one favoured of God. And don't forget that Ishmael was the ancestor of half the great Arab race. The other or Southern half are descended from Qahtan (Yokdan) the son of Set (Seth), and an older branch of Abraham's ancestors. The descendants of Qahtan accepted Ishmael and his descendants though they called them 'Arab al Musta'ariba, or Arabs who became Arabs as opposed to their own proud title of 'Arab al 'Ariba or those who were Arabs from the first.

"When Hagar was driven into the desert to die with her baby boy, Abraham had migrated to the south as was his annual custom and as all Badawin even to this day move, in search of grazing. He was at the time not far from where the town of Mecca stands to-day. There was of course no Bait Allah (House of God) in those days. Well, as the unfortunate Hagar was about to die of thirst, she grieved greatly for her offspring—and in frantic agony left her baby in a sandy water-course, and started running about near two small hills which were at hand, praying to God all the while to save her child.

"The two hills later became known as Safa and Marwa, and are now inside the precincts of modern Mecca. God heard her prayer, for on staggering back exhausted to see if her child were still alive, she found a small *thamila* (pool) of water lying in a hole in the sand that had been excavated by her child's legs as it lay kicking in the sand. She dug further and more water oozed into the hole, and she drank long and deeply. She was saved and her prayers had been answered. That *thamila* is to-day the famous well of Zam Zam which lies inside the precincts of the Harám or Holy Place in Mecca. Later Hagar was found by certain Arabs of the locality and was cared for and became one of them.

k: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Ishmael's Wives

Chap. XXII

173
539

"In the course of time Ishmael grew up and Hagar was gathered to her fathers, and never saw Abraham again.

"Ishmael then took unto himself as wife a girl of the tribe which had befriended his mother, and he built her a small mud and stone home near the water that had saved his and his mother's life. From there Ishmael would wander forth with the camels and sheep that he had now acquired, and would return in the evening to his wife. He also was a great hunter.

"It came to pass when Ishmael was about one score and five years of age that the aged Abraham, having once more moved with his flocks and camels to that region, was ordered by God in a dream to look for his son Ishmael the son of Hagar, as he was surely alive. Abraham had always yearned for the lost Hagar and greatly rejoiced at the news. He accordingly left his camp daily to see if he could find his son. One day God guided his footsteps and brought him to Ishmael's little house. Ishmael was away but his wife, seeing an aged man, and obviously a shaikh from his finely caparisoned camel, which he was making kneel in front of her house, went out and invited him in. Abraham entered and sat down, but was given only a drink of water, for the wife explained that she had no food in the house. This was untrue, for she had in fact some milk and dates in her larder but did not want to waste them on a stranger. Abraham felt within him that the house was that of his long-lost son, but said nothing, and at length rose to go. As he mounted his camel he said, 'O woman, when thy husband returneth tell him to cleanse the threshold (*'atiba*) of his house'. With that he was gone.

"When Ishmael returned in the evening and heard about the visit of the aged stranger and what he had said to his wife, he was wroth and said, 'Woman, thou didst not do well, in thou didst fail to honour the guest and give him of all thou hadst; Verily thou art the threshold of my house, and it shall be cleansed'. With that he put her away and sent her back to her people. Not long after Ishmael took unto himself another wife, and two years later Abraham again presented himself at his house in the same way as before.

"Again Ishmael was absent, this time a-hunting. Ishmael's wife welcomed the stranger in, tended him kindly and gave of all she had in the house. Again Abraham rose to go, and as he mounted his camel

l: Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

173 539 he said, 'O woman, tell thy husband to guard the threshold of his house, for it shall be blessed with a great blessing for this day's work'.

"When Ishmael returned from the chase and heard the story, he too rejoiced and said, 'I smell the smell of my father, verily it is he who hath been with thee. Blessed also art thou, O wife, for thy children shall be known throughout the ages for their hospitality to strangers. This shall be the sign unto the world that the children of Ishmael have been blessed and are the favoured of God.'

"Then Ishmael rose up and searched for his father Abraham and finding him after some days, he made himself known to him. And Abraham rejoiced exceedingly that he had found his son.

"Now the age of Ishmael was twenty and seven summers. Now it came to pass after these things that Abraham one day dreamed a dream. He then called his son Ishmael and said unto him, 'My son, I saw in my sleep that I have to take thee up into yon high mountain, prepare therefore an ass for me to ride on, and do thou follow me'. On the journey and as Ishmael followed some way behind his father, Iblís (the devil) in the form of a benign old man stepped from behind some rocks and spake to him thus: 'My son, follow not the footsteps of that wicked old man going before thee, for assuredly he will kill thee on the top of that mountain, turn thee back that thou may be saved'. But Ishmael cursed the old man and drove him away, casting seven stones after him. Now the place where Ishmael stoned the tempter Iblís, is known as Muna to this day, and is marked by three pillars which all good Muslims stone during the Pilgrimage. The name of the mountain is known also as 'Arafat or the 'mountain of witness' to this day, and is visited by thousands of Muslims when performing the Haj.

"When Abraham and Ishmael reached the top of the mountain Abraham said unto Ishmael: 'My son, I saw in my sleep that I have to sacrifice thee'. Then the son said to his father: 'My father, thy will is my will, but tie the cords very tight to keep me from trembling, and remove my garments lest some of my blood spatter on them and I shall thus lose merit, and lest my wife grieve when she sees them. Also sharpen the blade well, and pull it quickly across my throat so that death may be easier, for verily death is a very hard matter. And when you come back to my wife, give her my salaams, and if she

k Dickson G-5 (1929-47) 1951 MI 1 Kuwait
Bedouins MJ4

Sacrifice of Ishmael

so desires give her my shirt, perhaps it may comfort her a little.' Abraham said, 'My son, you help me to do what God hath commanded me to perform'. 173 539

"Then Abraham did as his son requested, and after he had bound him he bent down and kissed him, weeping all the time. Ishmael his son also wept till the tears ran down his cheeks.

"Then Abraham put the knife to his son's throat, but it did not cut.

"It has been said that God had put a sleeve of brass round his son's throat.

"Then Ishmael said: 'O my father, turn me on my face, for when you see my eyes you are sorry for me, and pity takes hold of you and keeps you from doing that God has commanded you to do'.

"So his father did this, but when he put the knife to the back of the neck, it turned over, and a voice called to him, 'Faithfully done, O Abraham, thou art my servant indeed'.

"Then Abraham turned round and found a ram entangled by its horns in a nearby bush, so he sacrificed it in place of his son Ishmael.

"And it came to pass that after sojourning awhile with his son Ishmael and his wife who had joined him, Abraham returned to his own country, but Ishmael remained in the land of his adoption."

The above story appears to have been taken from a very old book known as *Qisás al Anbiyá* or Stories of the Prophets, written centuries ago, though I have no reference book which gives its date. Suffice it to say that the writer wrote many tales regarding events of the Old Testament, and almost all the knowledge the Badawin of Arabia has of ancient Biblical history comes from this book. 173 538

It has been said that educated Muslims do not pay much attention to the *Qisás al Anbiyá*, though I do not like to think this is the case.

It is interesting to learn from this book that among early Muslims there was a difference of opinion as to whom Abraham was going to offer up. The Qur'an does not definitely give the name. Some persons of prominence thought it was Isaac and not Ishmael, while others even held that it was Joseph. The tradition that for a long time, and until the Ka'bah was burned in the days of Hajjáj, there hung on its walls a *pair of ram's horns*, made the author of the *Qisás al Anbiyá* decide that it must have been Ishmael.

Bedouins XIII4

542

A Lewd Story

Chap. XLIV

AN 'AJMAN STORY TOLD AT THE EXPENSE OF THE 'AWAZIM

539 342 The 'Awazim tribe use a curious expression which differs from that of all other tribes. When they want to put up the back and side walls of their tent (*rwag*) instead of saying, *Ya fulan rowag al bait* ("O, So-and-so, place the side curtains round the tent"), as is said by all self-respecting tribes, they say, *Ya fulan, 'ittir al bait* ("So-and-so, make the tent respectable"). This particular expression is said to recall a rather lewd story about their tribe, of which they are heartily ashamed. The story is of 'Ajman origin and is as follows:

639 A young 'Ajman warrior once had his tent close to that of an 'Azmi (singular of 'Awazim), who was on very friendly terms with him. Both young men had pretty sisters who often played together, when their brothers were out with the camels or away raiding. The young men themselves were unmarried, as neither had the wherewithal to buy himself a wife. One day as the two lads were coming home after a long day's hunting, the 'Ajman youth said to the 'Azmi, "What do you say to exchanging sisters this evening—I take yours and you take mine, no one is about or near us, let us enjoy ourselves?" The 'Azmi having agreed, both on reaching their camp told their sisters. The girls also agreed, but the 'Ajman youth before he actually sent his sister off to his friend's tent warned her saying, "Be very careful not to let that low-born 'Azmi really mishandle you; if you do, I shall certainly kill you. When he comes to make love you must roll about the floor and avoid his embrace, and generally prevent him working his will on you."

The two youths then took each the other's sister to bed, but the clever 'Ajman girl would not allow the 'Azmi to get near her, and by rolling about and ever escaping his clutches, managed to do as her brother had told her. Maddened with disappointment the 'Azmi called out to his sister in the other tent saying, "Do not let my friend touch you but do as this one is doing, roll about, roll about (*rowagi, rowagi*)". His sister's voice came in reply, "My brother, I cannot, I cannot, it is already too late".

Since that time the 'Awazim tribe never use the expression *rowagi al bait* to a woman, or to a man *rowag al bait*.